

likely cause of these features and it was decided that they were probably produced by a vertebrate.

While the hollows appeared similar to the diggings of a canine such as the red fox, *Vulpes vulpes*, the huge numbers of these impressions made this unlikely and the tracks remained unexplained. Piscean or avian causes seem the only possible alternatives.

One author (G.M.) leans strongly towards the piscean effect. From evidence of high water marks, it appears that the intertidal flats would be immersed under approximately 15 to 20 cm of water at high tide. Schools of demersal fish could forage across the flats in sufficient numbers to produce the effects observed. Catfish seem a likely possibility, especially the cobbler, *Cnidogobius macrocephalus*, which is very common in estuaries of the southwest coast. The circular depressions could result as the catfish foraged for small invertebrate infauna in the substrate. The tracks could result from fish moving progressively across the sediment, 'shuffling' as it were, with their ventrally placed mouths in contact with the substrate. The widths of the tracks correspond well with widths of cobbler heads.

After some discussion with colleagues, the second author (J.B.) suggested that avian causes are reasonable alternatives. Silver gulls, *Larus novaehollandiae*, occur in large numbers on the flats of the Murray delta. Gulls can forage for invertebrates in sediment by 'puddling' with feet or wings at high tide, hence possibly producing the depressions. The tracks might result from a gull progressing across the flat, puddling as it moved. Feeding swans, *Cygnus atratus*, are known to produce depressions but the tracking could not be readily explained.

Subsequent to the observations reported here, J.B. has encountered similar impressions on tidal flats of the Swan estuary. Given the immense numbers of these features on mudflats close to Perth, it seems inconceivable that they have not been observed before. Discussions with colleagues have not yielded a definitive explanation. We invite any interested parties to proffer theories for the causes of these remarkable depressions and tracks.

NOTES ON THE HERPETOFAUNA OF WOODY ISLAND, ARCHIPELAGO OF THE RECHERCHE.

By BRADFORD MARYAN, 20 Ockham Street, Lynwood W.A. 6155
and DAVID ROBINSON, 3 Wanbrow Way, Duncraig W.A. 6023.

INTRODUCTION

Goodsell *et al.* (1976) recorded five species of lizards on Woody Island, Archipelago of the Recherche. These comprise two geckos and three skinks. During 26-29 September 1986, members of the W.A. Naturalist's Club visited the island where we carried out a reptile survey. Two additional species of skink, *Cryptoblepharus virgatus clarus* and *Morethia obscura* were recorded. Notes on all species recorded by us are included below.

ANNOTATED LIST

Gekkonidae

Phyllodactylus marmoratus Marbled Gecko

Very common beneath granite slabs and pieces of decaying wood. Aggregations of this species were commonly encountered including 30+ adults beneath a slab of granite on 28 September.

Phyllurus millii Barking Gecko

Very common beneath granite slabs where aggregations of up to five individuals were commonly encountered.

Scincidae

Crystoblepharus virgatus clarus Sun Skink

Very common on logs, piles of decaying branches and granite rocks. An aggregation consisting of six adults was found beneath a granite slab on 28 September.

Ctenotus labillardieri Red-legged Skink

Very common beneath granite slabs and active on outcrops and among vegetation. We found this species to be the most common reptile on the island.

Egernia napoleonis Salmon-bellied Skink

Very common where granite outcrops occur. We also observed this lizard foraging in tall shrubs where it dropped to the ground when disturbed. Aggregations of up to four individuals were commonly encountered.

Hemlergis peronii Four-toed Skink

Very common beneath granite slabs on soil, under pieces of decaying wood and excavated from beneath leaf litter.

Morethia obscura

Common among leaf litter and low vegetation on the periphery of granite outcrops.

DISCUSSION

Seven species of lizard are now known from Woody Island. Goodsell *et al.* (1976) also listed *Egernia multiscutata*. We found no evidence of *E. multiscutata* on the island and believe it was misidentified for *Egernia napoleonis*.

The possibility that additional species will be recorded with future collecting using pit-traps is highly probable.

No snakes have been recorded on Woody Island although *Acanthophis antarticus* Death Adder and *Pseudonaja affinis* Dugite are common on some of the nearby islands. It is possible that snakes once occurred on this island but the combined impact of human disturbance, bushfires and grazing may have depleted their numbers.

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REFERENCE

- J. GOODSSELL, A. TINGAY & S.R. TINGAY. 1976. A Resource Survey of Woody Island, Archipelago of the Recherche. W.A. Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife. Report No. 21.